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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BUCHAREST 000272

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ROMANIA: SOURCES OF CONDUCT

Classified By: Charge d'affaires, a.i. Jeri Guthrie-Corn; Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Though the fundamentals of Romania's foreign policy have not changed under the new coalition government led by Prime Minister Emil Boc, the combination of Russia's August 2008 incursion into Georgian territory, followed by another disconcerting Russian action in the region (the January natural gas cut-off), and the economic downturn have fostered a new sense of urgency and anxiety for Romania's national security interests. The Romanian sense of the "known unknowns" - a unique phrase that resonated well in the Foreign Ministry - is compounded by the political transition in the United States and growing economic insecurity. Romania paradoxically wants both regional stability and a change in regional relationships. This means, first and foremost, continued broadening and deepening of the U.S.-Romanian Strategic Partnership including a pledge to fulfill all international commitments. Romania continues to adjust its policies in the Black Sea region (through the Caucasus to the Caspian Sea) to encourage a process of integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions. Romania also seeks to explore ways to strengthen positive, historical relationships with Middle Eastern states and other "non-aligned" states. There is no shortage of challenges for Romania in any of these areas. While personalities, infrastructural and cultural impediments, and organizational inefficiencies are the main culprits behind Romania's foreign policy challenges, these are usually offset by Romania's good will and intentions. The lack of resources, including absorptive capacity, is not only an obvious controlling factor, but also more frequently the source of Romania's conduct. End Summary.

Identity and the U.S.-Romanian Strategic Partnership

12. (C) Romanian foreign policy has not changed fundamentally in the shift from former Prime Minister Tariceanu to the 2009 government of Prime Minister Emil Boc. The 2008 elections that brought Boc in with the Democratic-Liberal Party (PD-L) and Social Democratic Party (PSD) coalition have shifted the deck-chairs, but the direction is the same. The replacement of Tariceanu by the low-key Emil Boc gives former ship captain President Basescu greater leeway at the helm of foreign affairs and national security policy. However, PSD head (and Senate President) Mircea Geoana and even Chamber of Deputies head Roberta Anastase have indicated that they, too, want to put their mark on Romanian foreign policy decisions. Established over ten years ago by then-Presidents Clinton and Constantinescu (from the now-defunct Peasant Party), the Romanian Government and political elites understand and appreciate the material benefits of their Strategic Partnership with the U.S. (SP) that continue to accrue to Romania, even if the nuances are missed by the general population. The PSD continues to view itself as a champion

of trans-Atlanticism and tries to claim credit for bringing Romania into NATO. While somewhat more EU-Centric, senior members within the National Liberal Party (PNL) Tariceanu government and the Boc government fully support the transformational nature of the SP, especially in the military, security and intelligence services. The PD-L, the PSD, and the PNL value a broadening of the SP, to include a more intensive non-security-related relationship, especially in terms of private sector investment and closer collaboration on foreign affairs.

13. (C) U.S. demarches and notifications to the MFA following major announcements or press-staging events in Washington or elsewhere consistently engender moments of disappointment. At times we inadvertently generate derision about the "strategic partnership" in the Romanian press when it becomes apparent that on some issues of national importance to Romania (e.g., Western Balkans, Black Sea, Iraq or Afghanistan, Middle East, etc.) there was limited or "fait accompli" previewing with Bucharest before news breaks from inside the Beltway. A classic example is the embargoed Human Rights Report. The MFA pleaded for a pre-release copy of the report, citing the "strategic partnership" as the reason for special dispensation to prepare for the inevitable political/media attacks, whether fair or not. While some of the media's vitriol aims to ridicule Basescu's infamous Bucharest-London-Washington "Axis" comments from the 2004 presidential campaign, there is still an element of hopefulness in a U.S.-Romanian "special relationship" that is simultaneously naive and endearing. Nonetheless, former Foreign Minister (and PSD member of the European Parliament) Adrian Severin referred to Romanians, trans-Atlantic

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instincts as "genetically coded." His argument was that Romania's geo-strategic vulnerabilities (trapped by Hapsburg, Ottoman, Czarist and then Soviet Russian dynasties) over the centuries fostered a penchant among Romanians to look beyond "European" prescriptions about their national identity.

14. (C) At a February conference on "Cultural Identity and the Security Dimension", National Security Advisor Iulian Fota argued Romanians were unsure of not only who they are, but also who they wanted to be. He said that Romania needs a national dialogue on identity because, "before you know where you are going, you should know first who you are." He very much sees Romania's transformation both within the EU and in NATO as a work in progress. University of Bucharest Sociologist Dan Dungaciu made a similar argument, but added that there is a growing political generation gap in Romania between those who are nostalgic for Ceausescu-like controls, those who reject any attempt to look for benefits from the Ceausescu era, and those -- mainly young people -- who either are scrambling to get out of Romania, rebelling against their elders, or biding their time under the current rules of the game. Dungaciu described a Romania that is still trying to find where it fits in Europe. This "identity" issue is one reason why other observers, like Severin, ascribe a "Trans-Atlantic gene" to Romanians; Romanians look to the U.S. because history and geography has not offered up anything better!

Black Sea Strategy

15. (C) Since the launching of the Basescu-inspired Black Sea Forum on Cooperation and Partnership in 2006, Romania has adjusted its engagement on Black Sea security issues to parallel U.S. policy emphasis on "soft power." Turkey's visceral reactions to any Russian mention of Black Sea security in a multinational forum make Bucharest's stance imperative. Following NATO's Bucharest Summit, when MFA Political Director Stefan Tinca briefed Alliance embassies on priorities, the Turkish DCM challenged every Black Sea point Tinca raised even after Tinca pointed out that Ankara and Bucharest had negotiated the Black Sea language together. Romania since has moderated its tone in a conscious attempt

to squash irritants in its relations among the Black Sea littoral states, including the removal of the Black Sea Forum link from the MFA's webpage. It has not been enough to build the more cooperative, collaborative, and inclusive experience Romania needs in order to promote a Black Sea regional identity. The MFA is currently reviewing its Black Sea strategy.

16. (C) In most Romanian assessments of the challenges to its national security interests, Russia looms omnipresently. The Russian role in Moldova/Transnistria, Russia's suspension of activities under the CFE treaty, and the August 2008 move into Georgia are seen as part of a Russian tapestry to block Romania's efforts to diversify gas supplies away from Russian sources, better regional balance throughout the region (Caspian Sea inclusive), and most importantly shift the NATO and EU frontiers further eastward. The Russian move against Georgia seriously reversed the more positive momentum that Romania was counting on after the 2008 NATO Summit. Romania appreciates somewhat better than others the importance of the process of NATO integration as the best way to accelerate towards eventual EU membership. EU membership for Georgia, Ukraine and Turkey are foremost in Romania's Black Sea strategy because the process of integration into the EU would also compel reconciliation of a wide range of unresolved bilateral issues with (mainly) Ukraine and Turkey, further entice Moldova away from Russia, and open up a more secure and stable commercial corridor not only through the southern Caucasus but also towards the Middle East. The August events in Georgia have forced Bucharest to recalculate where Russia may move next to create obstructions in Romania's Black Sea security space. Though there is a general cultural obsession with Moldova, Ukraine-Russia relations are much more prominent in Romania's calculations.

17. (C) That is not to understate Romania's feelings about Moldova. Over the past year, Romania -- especially President Basescu -- has learned to moderate reactions to what are viewed as President Voronin's efforts to provoke Romanian nationalism as a threat to Moldova's sovereignty. The Moldovans have expelled Romanian journalists, diplomats including the ambassador, students and Orthodox priests on various pretenses. Romania's instinct to strike back has been superceded by the larger strategic goal of trying to get the EU more fully focused and engaged in Moldovan issues. As

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MFA Coordinator for Moldovan Cooperation Constantin Matache put it, "when Romania alone reacts negatively, Romania loses; we may have the border but we need to make this an EU, not a Romanian, concern." Moldovan expert and university professor Dan Dungaciu stated it more explicitly that the EU must get more involved in concrete ways, otherwise it will continue to lose Moldovans' hearts and minds because the average Moldovan only sees Russia as Moldova's benefactor and defender. Romania is concerned about both Voronin's control over Moldova and the Russian propensity to turn Moldova into a Black Sea pawn. Nonetheless, Romania will remain fully committed to a peaceful, stable, and sovereign Moldova (as an EU member state, Romania really has no choice), and believes stronger association between Chisinau and Brussels is the only, if not the best, way to get there. Moldova will continue to be a test of Romanian resolve to get the EU to develop a more strategic view of the Black Sea.

Too important to fail

18. (C) When the story broke in early March about the espionage case involving a Romanian NCO and a retired, former-Bulgarian Defense Attache Marinov Zikolov, MFA Director General for Bilateral Affairs Zidaru privately expressed deep disappointment that a Ukrainian parliamentarian acknowledged to the press a link between the spy case and Romania's request that Ukraine withdraw its military attach and a counselor. The MFA wanted to keep the link out of the press out of fear that the publicity would

have a negative impact on Ukraine's NATO aspirations. Zidaru emphasized that no one was declared "persona non grata." But as soon as the story broke, there was wide press speculation that Russian diplomats in Romania were also asked to leave, raising the political tempo and fueling more press speculation about the extent of the scandal. Nonetheless, Zidaru underscored that the case was "low level," no damage to Romanian national security had occurred, and thus the scandal had no substantive impact on Romania's policy towards Ukraine.

¶9. (C) Though rumors are a major part of Romanian political life, and Romanians frequently link unrelated events in their propensity for conspiracy-think, just because they are paranoid does not mean they lack real adversaries. Romania's Balkan-like tendencies can lead others to try to see a strategy in what might just be unfortunately timed coincidences. From Ukraine's vantage point, a series of "setbacks" led to such a conclusion: a recent International Court of Justice ruling on the Black Sea maritime delineation favoring Romania over Ukraine; postponement of President Basescu's visit to Ukraine because "not all of the preparations were completed in time" for his early March visit; delays over the completion of negotiations for a simplified Romania-Ukraine border crossing regime (Ukraine accused Romania of submitting some last minute amendments such as adding additional consular offices to what Kiev claims were "already agreed provisions"); all capped by the spy scandal. Coming right after a shut-off of natural gas supplies that Romania blamed at least partially on Ukraine, the perception is that this strategic relationship is not as solid as it could be. That said, the MFA felt compelled to reassure us that Romania continued to support fully Ukraine's prospects for membership in NATO and the EU, noting bilateral hiccups were insignificant compared to the need for Ukraine to integrate into Euro-Atlantic structures.

¶10. (C) A more complicated challenge for Romania is maintaining good relations with Turkey. In spite of the bloodied history with the Ottomans, Romania today prides itself on a strong political, economic and social relationship with Turkey and is fully committed to Turkey joining the EU. Both countries also are fully committed to preserving the CFE "flank regime" that establishes a special subset of limitations on Russian forces in their North Caucasus Military District -- a vital Confidence and Security Building Mechanism for both the Black Sea and Southern Caucasus.

¶11. (C) Nonetheless there are still differences that inhibit Romania and Turkey from developing a fuller collaborative process in the Black Sea region. While Romania wants a more inclusive political regime that would strengthen both the voice of the smaller states and the influence of European and Euro-Atlantic institutions, it sees Ankara as more cautious regarding potential Russian reactions and concerned with the impact on Turkish management of the complicated access through the Bosphorus Straits, or greater maritime activity in

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the Sea itself. In that regard, Turkey is not at all shy about expressing its displeasure in Bucharest at Romania's eagerness for a larger NATO (and U.S.) presence in the Black Sea. Romania sees the issue as one of the essential components of a comprehensive energy security policy, especially given the need to diversify sources of supply away from pipelines carrying Russian gas across Turkey. Strong reservations from Ankara on Black Sea security issues beyond Operation Black Sea Harmony and BlackSeaFor factor very much into Romanian frustration on development of better energy routes from the Caucasus to the rest of Europe--a trade issue that gives advantage to Romania's strategic location on the Sea and access to the Danube. Nonetheless Romania is on track to sign soon all of the protocols for its full participation in Operation Black Sea Harmony, a significant forward step in Turkish-Romanian Black Sea security

relations. The Romanians have a proverb that describes their situation perfectly, "a goat must graze where it is leashed."

¶12. (C) The political transformation of the Western Balkans continues to be a vital national security interest for Romania. The MFA is aware that not only is the work far from finished, but there is a serious risk of political regression and ethnic divergence. Romania holds a rather legalistic view of Kosovo's independence, which they will only ever recognize if Serbia does. For Romania, there can be no internationally recognized imposition of special collective rights for a group; only individual human rights, as enshrined in the Declaration, carry legal weight. Romania denies international recognition of secession on the basis of collective rights and without the consent of the losing sovereign state. (Note: This legal view has everything to do with the ethnic Hungarian minority located in two counties in the center of Romania. End note). This view applies as much to Serbia-Kosovo as it does to Republika Srpska-Bosnia and Hercegovina. Romania does not believe the further fragmentation of the former Yugoslavia is in anyone's interest and risks becoming a prelude for further fragmentation, when the goal should be integration into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions. Romania knows it is in a minority position on this point among EU members, and it wants to stay fully engaged in the multinational processes to encourage inter-ethnic and inter-state reconciliation for the region, provided it does not need to compromise its legal principles. Not only does this position accommodate Romania's domestic concerns regarding Transylvania, but it also avoids an internal political debate over autonomy and the impact this could have on relations with Hungary, or the dangers associated with Transnistria in the Republic of Moldova.

¶13. (C) While Romania's economy was growing on average at an impressive seven percent pace over the past few years it could afford to dream big. The momentum obtained from joining NATO and the EU did render more sophisticated ambitions, including successfully hosting the 2007 Francophone Summit and the 2008 NATO Summit; modernizing its military procurements to better meet current operational requirements for NATO interoperability; sustaining or in some instances expanding its security commitments in Iraq, Afghanistan, or in the Western Balkans; having a more proactive diplomacy in the Middle East and Central Asia, to trying to build a Black Sea regional identity. That momentum is now gone. The combination of Russian actions in Georgia and the global financial downturn has put most of Romania's international ambitions on hold for now. Unavoidable budget reductions and delay in meeting its strategic procurement schedule will negatively impact Romania's confidence in its ability to maintain its foreign and domestic commitments. In this Romanian presidential election year, the need to focus on domestic concerns will make the lack of resources the centerpiece for Romania's ability to do less with less.

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